Brainstorm Ideas Using a Time Line

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Use a time line to brainstorm a memoir.
• Work with a partner to develop a time line of important memories.
• Contribute to a class list of memoir ideas.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Writer’s notebooks
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If necessary, copy the sentence frames from “Strategies to Support ELs” on chart paper.

1. Focus

Explain the Brainstorming Process

Say: Brainstorming helps writers search for memories—little seeds that can grow into good pieces of writing. When we need ideas for writing a memoir, a time line can help us brainstorm. A time line helps us see the important things in our lives stretched out across a page. These events are what made us who we are. These are the memories we choose from to write a memoir. Let me show you how I use a time line to help me brainstorm ideas.

Model Brainstorming Using a Time Line

Use the sample think-aloud to help you develop your own brainstorming models to share with students. Demonstrate how to record dates or ages and memories on a time line on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Sample think-aloud. Say: When I want to write a memoir, I use a time line. It helps me begin with my earliest memories of times that caused big changes in my life and then move forward. One of the first events is when my brother was born. I was only six and until then I was an only child! It took me a long time to learn to appreciate the new addition to my family. I’ll begin my time line with that memory. Something else I’ll never forget is moving away when I was in the fourth grade. Leaving all my friends behind was very, very hard for me. I missed them for a long time, but I learned to make new friends and begin again. That’s another memory I’ll list. Going to college was something else that made a big difference in my life. It was the first time I’d ever lived away from home and it taught me a lot. I could also write a memoir about that, so I’ll put it on my time line, too.

Sample Brainstorming Time Line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event:</th>
<th>brother is born</th>
<th>moved to new town</th>
<th>went to college</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age:</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample Brainstorming Time Line
2. Rehearse

Practice Brainstorming Using a Time Line

Invite students to work with a partner to develop a time line of memories in their writer’s workshop notebooks. Remind students to focus on memories of events that are most important in their lives and to tell their partner why these events made a difference or created a change in their life.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need more support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Ideas

Bring students back together and invite them to share memories from their time lines. Discuss the range of memories that classmates shared and talk about the ones that may be common to many people. Explain that a memory from someone else’s life can often make us think of a memory from our own.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: As you brainstorm for writing your own memoir, a time line can help. Use it to record memories that can help your memoir show who you are as a person. That’s what a good memoir is about.

Encourage students to use a time line as they brainstorm ideas for a memoir during independent writing time. During conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share important events in their lives and explain why they were important.

Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Invite beginning ELs to draw a picture of an important memory from their lives. Encourage them to tell you about their drawing. Label key people and items in the drawing and help them use the words to form simple sentences about their memory.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Provide sentence frames to help ELs talk to their partners about their idea for a memoir. For example:

- I remember_____.
- An important event in my life was_____.
- The event made me_____.

**All Levels**

If you have ELs whose first language is Spanish, share the following English/Spanish cognate: memory/la memoria.